



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
March 2, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert

Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 1967 HD1 – RELATING TO PERMITTING.

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i would like to provide comments on HB 1967 HD1 – Relating to Permitting. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of this measure, which implements recommendations of the Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development (SPEED) Task Force by establishing a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with UH and the community colleges. UH agrees that workforce shortages in permitting roles present a significant barrier to housing, infrastructure, and economic development statewide, and we appreciate the Legislature's recognition of higher education as a key partner in addressing these challenges.

UH offers a range of academic and career pathways that align closely with permitting and plan review and we would embrace the opportunity to work with the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) to facilitate the relevant pathways from our existing programs to the workforce. Our programs can produce graduates who are well-positioned to enter permitting-related careers.

UH supports the goals of this measure and looks forward to continued collaboration with DBEDT, state and county agencies, and the Legislature to strengthen Hawai'i's permitting workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Monday, March 2, 2026, 2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 1967, HD 1
RELATING TO PERMITTING.

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports HB 1967, HD 1**, which implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force by requiring the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawai'i and community colleges and coordinate with state and county permitting agencies on certain tasks related to classification levels, salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of employees; and appropriates funds.

HB 1967, HD 1 emerged from the recommendations of the Building Permit Permitted Interaction Group (PIG) of the Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development Task Force. By identifying specific staffing gaps, the Task Force has provided a clear roadmap for workforce development that this bill seeks to implement. This measure directly addresses the housing policy directives and emergency proclamations set forth in Governor Green's plan to increase housing inventory across the islands. A primary obstacle to achieving these goals has been the shortage of trained permitting staff available to process the current and projected workload. HB 1967, HD 1 provides the necessary resources to expand capacity, allowing agencies to streamline the permitting process and clear existing backlogs that have historically delayed critical housing projects.

OPSD **supports the amendments made in HB 1967, HD 1**. By acknowledging existing academic programs tailored to state and county permitting needs, this draft ensures that we are leveraging local educational infrastructure to bridge critical technical gaps in our agencies. Furthermore, OPSD supports the flexibility to structure tuition incentives as reimbursements, loan repayments, or post-service loan forgiveness. Providing these varied financial pathways is essential to address the diverse economic realities of students and early-career professionals. Post-service loan forgiveness in particular serves as a powerful retention tool, ensuring that the

HB 1967 HD1 RELATING TO PERMITTING - SUPPORT
State Office of Planning and Sustainable Development
March 2, 2026

State's investment in a student's education translates directly into long-term institutional stability and expertise within our permitting departments.

OPSD supports HB 1967, HD 1 so long as it does not affect appropriation requests in the administrative budget. We respectfully urge this committee to pass this measure to ensure our workforce has the capacity to meet Hawai'i's housing demands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Finance

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 2, 2026

H.B. 1967, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO PERMITTING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of H.B. 1967, H.D. 1, which requires the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawai'i and community colleges and coordinate with state and county permitting agencies on certain tasks related to classification levels, salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of employees.

Our organization represents hundreds of employees, across all counties, that are involved in the permitting process. For years we have been advocating that the counties put more focus and investment on the recruitment and retention of employees involved in the permitting process – such as increasing the pay, reducing hiring times, professional training, and providing incentives that encourage career growth and promote employment longevity. We would like to note that the counties already possess the authority as proposed in subsection (c). However, we appreciate the intent of this measure as it continues the conversation about ways our counties can look to develop modern and attractive benefits of this century, to recruit and retain a qualified permitting workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1967, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference**

RE: HB1967 HD1 Relating to Permitting

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1967 House Draft 1 (HB1967 HD1), which implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force to develop a long-term workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawaii and community colleges to support the recruitment and retention of state and county employees that fill these roles.

HB1967 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This bill strengthens one of the most important components of the permitting: those who administer the system and ensure timely review of applications. The Blueprint emphasizes the need for strategies, such as this one proposed by the SPEED Taskforce, that improve Hawaii's economic competitiveness by reducing administrative bottlenecks and supporting industry led workforce development.

Permitting delays and administrative backlogs are widely recognized as significant impediments to economic growth in Hawaii, affecting housing supply, infrastructure investment, renewable energy deployment, and business expansion. By investing in a long-term strategy to recruit, train, and retain a qualified permitting workforce — including tuition incentives, clear career pathways, and competitive compensation structures — this measure directly targets one of the systemic barriers to expedited project delivery and economic development.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1967 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



House Committee on Finance

Date: Monday, March 2, 2026

Time: 2:00 PM

Place: Conference Room 308

RE: HB 1967 HD1, Relating to Permitting

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony with comments on HB 1967 HD1, relating to permitting. This measure implements recommendations of the SPEED Task Force by directing DBEDT to develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawai'i and community colleges, coordinate with state and county agencies on permitting workforce standards and hiring, and appropriate funds to support these efforts.

BOMA Hawai'i, a regional affiliate of BOMA International, represents commercial property owners and managers across the state and works to enhance management practices, promote sustainability, and support professional excellence within Hawai'i's commercial real estate industry.

Timely and predictable permitting is one of the most significant issues affecting our members. Prolonged permitting delays increase project costs, delay tenant occupancy, stall capital improvements, and create economic uncertainty for property owners, contractors, and small businesses. These delays not only affect individual projects but also have broader impacts on job creation, housing availability, infrastructure upgrades, and overall economic activity across the state.

We appreciate the intent of this measure to strengthen the permitting workforce pipeline and improve coordination across agencies. Investing in recruitment, training, and retention of qualified permitting staff is an important step toward addressing systemic backlogs and improving efficiency.

At the same time, we encourage continued focus on measurable outcomes, accountability, and cross-agency streamlining to ensure that workforce investments translate into meaningful reductions in review times and greater predictability for applicants. Addressing permitting challenges requires both adequate staffing and process improvements.

BOMA Hawai'i is committed to being part of the solution and is interested in working with the Legislature, DBEDT, and county partners to promote practical reforms that support economic growth while maintaining health, safety, and environmental standards.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



holomua

COLLABORATIVE

OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

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Committee: House Committee on Finance
Bill Number: HB 1967 HD1, Relating to Permitting
Hearing Date and Time: March 2, 2026 at 2:00pm (Room 308)
Re: Testimony of Holomua Collaborative- Support

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

We write in support of House Bill 1967 HD1, Relating to Permitting. The purpose of HB1967 HD1 is to develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawai'i and community colleges and coordinate with state and county permitting agencies on certain tasks related to classification levels, salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of employees.

Holomua supports initiatives that help keep all local working families in Hawai'i by addressing the root causes of our affordability crisis, and we believe that streamlining our permitting process is one of the most significant steps the state can take toward that goal. This bill is not just an administrative update; it is a vital economic development measure that addresses the systemic bottlenecks currently stifling our state's growth.

For too long, the slow pace of permitting has acted as an invisible tax on every project in Hawai'i, from affordable housing developments to critical infrastructure. These delays drive up carrying costs for builders, which are inevitably passed down to residents in the form of higher rents and home prices. The SPEED Task Force identified that a primary reason for these delays is a lack of capacity and staffing within our regulatory agencies. HB1967 HD1 offers a comprehensive solution by focusing on the workforce pipeline. By partnering with the University of Hawai'i and our community colleges to create tuition incentives and clear career paths for permit technicians and plan reviewers, we are investing in the human capital necessary to move our economy forward.

Furthermore, this bill recognizes that the state cannot compete for talent if public sector compensation remains disconnected from the private market. When our agencies lose their most experienced reviewers to the private sector, the entire system slows down, creating a cycle of stagnation that hurts everyone. By ensuring competitive pay and establishing emergency hiring procedures, HB1967 HD1 provides the tools needed to maintain a high-functioning government that can keep pace with the needs of a modern economy.



holomua
COLLABORATIVE

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A thriving economic environment requires predictability and efficiency. When businesses and developers face years of uncertainty in the permitting phase, it discourages investment and limits job creation. By passing HB1967 HD1, we can clear the path for more housing, better infrastructure, and a more robust economic future for Hawai'i's working families. We respectfully urge you to pass this measure and mahalo for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Matthew Prellberg
Policy and Communications Director



March 2, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Support for 1967, HD1, RELATING TO PERMITTING (Implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force. Requires the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawaii and community colleges and coordinate with state and county permitting agencies on certain tasks related to classification levels, salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of employees. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. [HD1])

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308, and VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawai'i (LURF) is a private research and trade organization founded in 1979, whose members include major Hawai'i landowners, developers, utility companies, and land use professionals. LURF's mission is to research, educate, and advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, laws, and regulations that encourage well-planned economic growth, agriculture, housing, renewable energy, commercial and industrial uses, health care, and tourism, while safeguarding Hawai'i's significant natural, historic, and cultural resources, public health, and safety. LURF members have collectively helped to build the most market and affordable housing in Hawai'i by working collaboratively with state and county administrations and agencies.

LURF **supports HB 1967, HD1**, which implements certain recommendations of the State's Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development Task Force. The Task Force identified understaffing and recruitment of employees as a common impediment to the County permitting process and the major cause of poor plan quality and permit backlogs and recommended that the Legislature invest in a long-term permitting workforce strategy to support the recruitment and retention of state and county employees to fill key permitting roles. LURF believes that this measure will facilitate, coordinate and expedite state and intergovernmental permitting processes to improve the quality of plans and reduce permit delays for housing, infrastructure, and other projects.

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF is in **support of HB 1967, HD1**, and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of this measure.

HB-1967-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 9:37:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

SPEED will improve all aspects of permitting, which will result in increased economic activity and tax revenue. Mahalo!

Glen Kagamida, Hilo